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Fall 2012 Knight Award for Writing Exercises and Handouts

The Knight Award for Writing Exercises recognizes excellence in short exercises and/or handouts designed to improve student writing. Appropriate topics may be drawn from the whole range of writing issues, large scale to small scale, such as development of theses, use of secondary sources, organization of evidence, awareness of audience, attention to sentence patterns (e.g., passive/active voice, coordination/ subordination), attention to diction, uses of punctuation, attention to mechanics (e.g., manuscript formats, apostrophes). Exercises and handouts may be developed for use in and/or out of class.

Submissions should comprise three parts. (1) A copy of the handouts or instructions that go to students. (2) An explanation of the exercise/ handout and of the principles behind it, addressed to future instructors who may use the material. (3) If possible, an example of a student response.

Submissions may range in length from one to four or five pages.

Winning Writing Exercises and Handouts will be deposited in a web accessible archive and made available to other instructors under a creative commons attribution, non-commercial license. (See creativecommons.org for more information about cc licensing.)

The two winning entries will receive \$350, honorable mentions (if any) will receive \$125.

Submissions are due in 101 McGraw Hall by Friday, December 14. No exceptions can be made.

Fall 2012 Knight Award for Writing Exercises

~Please Print Clearly. Do not staple. Use paper clips only ~

Instructor's name Danya Glabau

CU ID # 1315345

Department STS Course # and title STS 1126: Science and Society: Illness + Medicine in Social Context

Should I win a prize, I give the John S. Knight Institute permission to publish, quote from, and/or distribute copies of the writing exercises, and to distribute publicity to newspapers and other publications, local and/or national, about my winning the prize. I also grant the Knight Institute permission to deposit the writing exercises in a web accessible archive and make them available under a creative commons attribution, non-commercial license. I am prepared to send electronic versions of my text to Donna O'Hara (dlo1@cornell.edu) in the Knight Institute. I understand that I will receive the award for my prize-winning essay upon submission of the electronic text.

Peer Workshop Guidelines

Title of Writing Exercises

Instructor's signature [Signature]

Date 12/11/12

The handouts included in my application for the Fall 2012 Knight Award for Writing Exercises and Handouts were used to guide four in-class peer workshop sessions in my Fall 2012 First-year Writing Seminar, STS 1126: Science and Society: Illness and Medicine in Social Context. Throughout the course, I led the students in five peer workshopping sessions. These handouts were used for the first four, each of which focused on one aspect of writing; the fifth workshop was open-ended, and in their comments students typically combined strategies from the four directed workshops.

I began developing templates for peer workshopping sessions during the Spring 2011 semester, when I was a TA for a Writing in the Majors course, STS 2051: Ethical Issues in Health and Medicine. Working with three other TAs and Professor Stephen Hilgartner, I led the development of peer workshop handouts tailored to the goals of that course. I further revised earlier versions of these handouts in Writing 7100 during Summer 2012, where I began to revise the document produced in the spring to respond to the needs of first-year writers and the thematic development of my fall course, STS 1126. Each document was reviewed and revised again during the Fall 2012 semester to address a particular element of writing; each workshop addressed a common weakness I had observed in previous writing assignments. These documents, then, represent a snapshot of the ongoing evolution of one element of my writing teaching toolkit.

Each of the attached handouts follows a similar format:

- A header stating the focus of the workshop.
- A few sentences (in light blue) explaining what will be workshopped.
- A list of elements of the paper to pay particular attention to.
- Each element has a list of questions that the student may address. They may also take these questions as a model and ask their own, different question.

The precise format varies slightly from handout to handout. I led a discussion about the focus area and format of each handout prior to having students exchange, read, and write 1-2 handwritten pages of comments on their peers' essays. Additionally, the "Quotes and Paraphrase" sheet was first used to analyze a set of three paragraphs with exemplary textual citations that every student read, commented on, and discussed in small groups,

and reused during the following class as a basis for peer workshopping. Students were required to address at least four of the different kinds of questions suggested in each handout; one of the questions addressed was always required to be a summary of the argument/thesis. Later workshops were followed up by small group and class discussions about elements of writing that readers thought were particularly effective in the current round of papers, and about challenges presented by the prompt, topic of the paper, or writing process for that assignment that they wanted to continue to work on.

Strategic changes were built into the sequence of workshops. Workshops advanced from focusing on specific issues and limited sections of text, like introductory paragraphs, to focusing on essay-wide concerns, like sustaining an argument throughout an entire piece of writing. Earlier handouts included ideas for how to use peer feedback, while later ones included less of this type of guidance. While earlier handouts asked students to address focused, specific questions, later ones gave them more leeway in deciding what kinds of comments to give to their peers. In doing this, I hoped to offer students inspiration and support for learning how to comment effectively on their peers' written work, while at the same time enabling them to become progressively more self-directed in choosing which aspects of writing to comment on, which peer comments to use in revising their writing, and how.

A motivating principle behind devising these peer workshop guidelines is my commitment to generous and generative scholarship at every level of education. That is, I hoped to give students guidelines that would help them recognize the strengths in their peers' writing, as well as the weaknesses, and to give written commentary centered around specific features of the written work that imagines possibilities for future development. This commitment has emerged from my own experience as a student writer and participant in graduate student writing groups, where I have found that critiques that build on the particulars of a piece of written work, including what works well, give clearer feedback on the purpose and aims of revision, and inspire more confidence in one's ability to improve a piece of writing. In my writing seminar, these handouts thus served at least two purposes in addition to guiding classroom activities: they aimed create an atmosphere of constructive but rigorous peer critique in the classroom, and they

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contributed to a larger course conversation about how best to use specific pieces of evidence to build effective written arguments in all forms of writing (from papers to peer reviews).

Introductory Paragraph Workshop

In class today, we will peer workshop the introductory paragraph of your second paper. Below are several steps that you can take to guide your evaluation and commentary on your peer's writing.

For the Reviewer:

1. **Summarize the argument.** What is the main argument? Is there a sentence or two that summarizes this argument as a thesis? What kind of an argument is it (definitional, generative, about an author's argument, ethical)?
2. **Identify major themes or concepts.** What themes or concepts is the author going to write about in their paper?
3. **Describe the evidence the author plans to use.** What story or examples do you think the author is planning to draw on in their paper?
4. **Evaluate the fit between argument and evidence.** Why do you think the author has chosen the concepts they have to discuss their main argument?
5. **Observe the organization of the paragraph.** How has the author organized their paragraph? Is it easy to identify each of the elements above given their organizational strategy?
6. **Suggest refinements.** What improvements can the author make? You should make suggestions that address at least 3 of the 5 elements listed above.

For the Writer:

1. **Did you succeed at introducing your argument?** Does the reviewer's interpretation suggest a new, more fruitful direction for your paper? Or would you rather revise your paper to better support your original argument?
2. **Do you need to reorganize your introduction?** Is the current organization of your introduction adequately introducing the major aspects of your argument?
3. **What should you change?** Consider any suggestions for additions carefully. Would changes make it easier to understand your main argument and concepts? What efforts to improve the writing will make the most difference?

Introductory Paragraphs: Some Tips

DO:

- Open your introduction with something interesting
 - Introduce the reading
 - Give an evocative example that is central to your argument
 - Quote or paraphrase a relevant author
 - Make a distinction between one term/event/author and another
- Introduce the main argument or thesis
- Introduce the main concepts and/or readings
- Introduce the main examples, story, or supporting evidence
- Organize your introduction in a way that makes it clear how concepts and examples support argument
- In general, do tell the reader what you're arguing, and hint at why it's interesting.

DON'T:

- Follow the inverted pyramid strategy: DON'T start with the world and everything
- Forget to state your argument
- Forget to state ANY concepts or authors you plan to address
- Address EVERY detail of your argument

Organization Workshop

In class today, we will peer workshop the introductory paragraph, the final body paragraph, and the conclusion of your final paper. Below are several steps that you can take to guide your evaluation and commentary on your peer's writing.

For the Reviewer:

1. **Summarize the argument presented in the introduction.** What is the main argument? Is there a sentence or two that summarizes this argument as a thesis? What kind of an argument is it (definitional, generative, about an author's argument, ethical)?
2. **Identify major themes or concepts.** What themes or concepts is the author going to write about in their paper?
3. **Describe the evidence the author uses.** What story or examples do you think the author is planning to draw on in their paper?
4. **Summarize the conclusion.** What is the main argument in the conclusion? How does the conclusion fit with or build on other sections of the paper?
5. **Evaluate the continuity of the argument.** Does the argument remain consistent between the introduction and the last section of the paper? Has it developed? Or has it wandered from the author's original intention?
6. **Suggest refinements.** What improvements can the author make? You should make suggestions that address at least 3 of the 5 elements listed above.

For the Writer:

1. **Did you succeed at communicating your argument?** Does the reviewer's interpretation suggest a new, more fruitful direction for your paper? Or would you rather revise your paper to better support your original argument?
2. **Do you sustain your argument throughout your paper?** Does the argument at the end of your paper bear some resemblance to how you present it in your introduction? Has it become more nuanced and developed?
3. **What should you change?** Consider any suggestions for additions carefully. What changes would help sustain your argument throughout your paper? What efforts to improve the writing will make the most difference?

Quotes and Paraphrase

Quotes and close paraphrase of an author's words can be an effective form of evidence in your writing. Citing an author may allow you to give an example that illustrates an aspect of your argument, use or dispute the author's point of view, compare one author's position to another's, or help you define a concept that you want to discuss in your analysis. It is important to remain attentive to the purpose of include a quotation or paraphrase, and to think about how it fits into the flow of your paper and your own argument. As you write your own papers and assignments, you may want to refer to these elements of citation to double check your own use of another author's words and ideas.

Below are 3 paragraphs that show how some members of the class have used quotation and paraphrase. As you read through them, do the following things:

- underline quotes
- underline paraphrase
- circle author's name(s)
- circle citations (e.g. page numbers)

Next, think about the purpose of the quotation(s) or paraphrase. Strategies may include:

- Using author's words as an example or illustration of a point
- Describing author's argument
- Illustrating author's argument
- Agreeing with or disputing author's argument
- Defining a concept introduced by another author

Finally, think about how the writer is situating, contextualizing, or using the quotation or paraphrase. Ask yourself the following questions:

- How does the writer use the author's words or ideas?
- How does the writer integrate the quotation or paraphrase into the paragraph?
- Why is the writer referencing what he/she is?
- What is the writer's opinion of the author's argument or example?
- Does the author cite a particular author's name, book, chapter, article, or page number?

Argument Workshop

This peer workshop will focus on identifying and evaluating your peers' arguments. You will comment on the argument of the paper overall, and then do a close reading of about one page of text, identifying where the writer makes arguments in this section. Below are several steps that you can take to guide your evaluation and commentary on your peer's writing.

For the Reviewer:

1. **Summarize the argument of the entire paper.** What is the main argument? Is there a sentence or two that summarizes this argument as a thesis? What kind of an argument is it (definitional, generative, about an author's argument, ethical)?
2. **Identify major themes or concepts.** What themes or concepts is the author going to write about in their paper?
3. **Describe the evidence the author uses.** What story or examples do you think the author is planning to draw on in their paper?
4. **Identify phrases and sentences where the author makes an argument.** Concentrating on about one page of text selected by the author, underline any phrases or sentences which make an argument. The argument may be part of the argument of the entire paper; it may be making a connection between a piece of evidence and the main argument; or it may be a stealthy argument about the nature of the world, medicine as a whole, or human nature. Pay particular attention to ferreting out such stealthy arguments and noting them for the author.
5. **Evaluate the purpose and effectiveness of argumentative passages.** After identifying argumentative passages, discuss why you think the author has included them.
 - a. Do they remind the reader of their main argument, or extend it?
 - b. Do they describe why a piece of evidence is relevant to their discussion?
 - c. Are they trying to build a case for why their argument should be interesting to the reader?

Evaluate the effectiveness by stating why this argumentative passage is necessary, and whether it moves the paper forward.